



## The Two Solitudes of Educational Policy and the Challenge of Development

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**Abstract:** Policy makers are challenged to improve educational outcomes, manage scarce resources and secure public acceptance of their initiatives to provide quality, relevant and effective education. In making decisions they are pulled between competing ideologies about the process and purposes of schooling. This paper explores these ideologies and suggests tensions between them. The paper also suggests a way forward for those seeking to establish evidence based, context sensitive policies and practices.

**Keywords:** Equity, Policy, Market Choice, Neoliberal, Evidence Based Decisions

### Introduction

As educational policy makers seek to deliver to the development goals of their country they are challenged to do so by competing and conflicting views about the very nature and purpose of primary and secondary education and the underlying rationale for public policy. Should they pursue the policy framework associated with the global educational reform movement (GERM) or should they focus on an educational policy driven by a strong commitment to public control, equity and teacher empowered schools? There is a fierce debate between these competing ideologies (and the respective social and economic costs of each position) and the way in which policy makers choose their options could settle the nature of education in a jurisdiction for several generations to come. Some see the choice between these competing ideologies as that between a capitalist-marketization system (GERM) and a professional community driven system (equity). Others have suggested it is a choice between established, traditional views of public education (equity) and a “shock-doctrine” approach to education (Klein, 2007; Sanchez, 2010, Tikly, 2016). This debate is fueled by the lack of resources, the growing hegemony of the World Bank education agenda and the commitment to education as a major domain within the 2030 sustainable development goals.

In this paper the two distinct policy positions are explored and explained and reference is made to recent critical evidence based reviews. This analysis is then connected to the challenge of achieving the educational goals of development and the idea that education is the key to economic development. The paper ends with a set of challenging questions for educational policy makers and some suggestions for action.

### Two Contrasting Policy Frameworks

#### The Policy Context

All who shape educational policy purport to advocate for the same outcomes: quality, accessible and affordable education for all, which is overseen by sound policy, clear lines of responsibilities and purposeful management of scarce resources. Education is seen as a means for enabling social and economic development and a reduction of inequality (Little & Green, 2009).



The term “quality” here is used to refer not just to the process of teaching and (engaged and productive) learning but also to quality learning outcomes. Quality is usually determined by reference to measurable learning outcomes, such as scores on internationally acceptable measures or key performance indicators (e.g., the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) or the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)). Access is usually determined in terms of the proportion of an age cohort who attends and completes a level of schooling. Affordability is usually ill-defined, but frequently measured in terms of the number of individuals excluded from a school system because of the cost of attending that system. Resource management and accountability are practiced very differently from one jurisdiction to another, but the underlying principle appears to be the business principle of value added per unit of expenditure, with some systems being more systematic than others in measuring value added.

Some systems, e.g., Denmark, Germany and Finland, seek to differentiate investment and routes to learning by intended outcome and practice streaming. For example, academic routes versus vocational routes for students through the school systems with the opportunity for cross-over between these two routes at key stages in the student journey has become common in many education systems. High performing education systems provide vocational education differently from academic education in their secondary school system while other jurisdictions, such as Canada, integrate these in community schools or “comprehensive” schools. Which of these routes might a developing economy choose, if choice is indeed an option?

Some systems also blend private education – both in terms of governance and financing - with public education. This is the case in many developing Commonwealth countries, with private schools ranging from mainly publicly funded community based schools run by family groups, entrepreneurs and NGOs to privately-funded elite schools

Privatization of public education gets to the heart of the ideological questions associated with the policy space for education for development. As Nancy Birdsall (1999) from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has noted:

The risks of privatization arise because developing and transitional economies, almost by definition, are handicapped by relatively weak institutions, less well-established rules of transparency, and often, not only high concentrations of economic and political power but a high correlation between those two areas of power. These conditions combine to make it difficult indeed to manage the privatization process *in a manner that is not disequalizing*. (Our emphasis).

In a more recent work, Abrams (2016) has looked at the growing transfer of assets from the public sector to the private sector in the United States and Europe and concludes that “asset stripping” and asset transfers come with increasing private control of public policy. The rise of private academy chains in England is one example of these transfers, but there are others (Ball & Youdell, 2007).

Seeking to connect educational development to the economic growth potential for a transitioning economy is at the heart of all development programs – economic growth depends on the capacity of human capital and its innovativeness. Accelerating the growth of human capital capacity is the implicit goal of most educational policies in the developing world.

## **The Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM)**

Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM) is a common name to a set of education policies that aim at governing education systems using commercial and market principles. It is often characterized by increased competition between schools over student enrolment, standardization of teaching and learning, reliance on standardized assessments for accountability purposes, de-professionalization of the teaching and leadership professions, and, as a consequence, privatization of public schools (Abrams, 2016; Sahlberg, 2016). GERM has emerged in the mid-1980s from so-called “third way” social policy (Giddins, 1998; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) and has increasingly become adopted as an

educational reform orthodoxy within many education systems throughout the world, including in the U.S., England, Australia and some developing countries.

Tellingly, GERM is often promoted through the interests of international development agencies and private enterprises through their interventions in national education reforms and policy formulation. As a framework, it has strong corporate support, most especially from global players such as Pearson, McGraw Hill, Google and the Gates Foundation, together with other private corporate foundations.

Since the 1980s, a number of common features of education policies and reform principles have been employed to try to improve the quality of education and fix the apparent problems in public education systems in the developed world. Some are now seeking to implement these in the developing world. At its heart, GERM involves these basic ideas:

- Learning can be broken down into distinct competencies and learning standards which can be tested for using external standardized measurements. Curriculum therefore needs to be standardized and modularized so that it is fair to all and we can test progress in standardized ways.
- Learning not tied to competencies or skills needed for the economy is not worth substantial investment – creative arts, fine arts and sports are marginalized by a strong focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics – the so called STEM subjects.
- Teachers are not part of the solution because ineffective teachers are seen as part of the problem. Teachers are therefore not designers and creators of learning, but deliverers of agreed upon curriculum. The idea that teachers need to be highly skilled and trained “professionals” gets in the way of efficiency, productivity and cost control, especially in developing countries. Teachers need to be trained, managed and paid by the value they add to learning as measured by analytics.
- Learning can and should be “personalized” – technology enables this (especially adaptive technology), made easier when the curriculum is standardized—this also makes testing and getting to scale easier.
- Teachers should make more use of technology so that they can better monitor student progress, mastery of competence, and intervene when a student is seen (from analytic data) to be struggling.
- Institutions should be accountable for their learning outcomes and cost management – value added auditing should be undertaken.
- Market forces should drive quality and investment - “winners” and “losers” can be quickly found and investments made to support and enforce effective learning models from “winning” schools in the rest of the system. Social enterprise in free markets is the best way to manage education.

Governments, like those in England, many parts of Australia and the US, are systematically pursuing GERM in their compulsory school systems (Abrams, 2016; Adamson, Astrand & Darling-Hammond, 2016; Ball & Youdell, 2007; Mansell, 2013; Graham, 2013) and this is also having an impact on teacher training, and college and university education world-wide. Underlying this is the use of business models to manage and run institutions, as if private business knew how to deliver efficient and effective public education. Institutions that adopt GERM tend to have a high manager-to-teacher ratio, high technology costs and at the end of the day, very little evidence of real improvements in learning outcomes. GERM is also a vendor driven strategy which governments find attractive. This is at the heart of the idea that the management of education as a social enterprise supported by public and private capital should be managed as a business rather than a public good.

Diane Ravitch (2013) has reviewed GERM and described it more fully in her most recent book. She outlines the historiography of GERM and the evidence, which is used to justify the policy positions. Her conclusion is that GERM is based on policy driven evidence - that is evidence carefully selected so as to support the policy as opposed to evidence-based decision-making. She points out that charter and private schools in the US – the test bed for many GERM developments – range from excellent to awful and are, on average, no more innovative or successful than public schools (Buchheit, 2015); virtual schools are cash cows for their owners, but poor substitutes for real teachers and real schools in terms of educational outcomes; and that poverty is strongly correlated with levels of educational attainment (Berliner, 2009, 2011, 2012). More to the point, there is little or no evidence to support the core components of GERM as ways of building an effective educational system in a developed country, never mind a developing one.

A part of the thinking about GERM, which is now beginning to be emphasized, especially in positioning GERM with developing countries, is the idea that this is a necessary stage of development – a kind of platform or base – from which subsequent innovation can occur (Adamson, Astrand & Darling-Hammond, 2016). For a developing or low performing system, GERM is an essential requirement to secure control of the system so as to enable a “starting point” for more innovative policies. This thinking seeks to excuse the excesses of GERM (e.g., high managerial control, standardization, testing, substantial investment in technology) on the grounds of establishing the baseline of performance for a country or system. There is no evidence that the subsequent required reforms to promote creativity, innovation and a more “liberal” school regime can overcome the embedded interests or culture, which GERM creates and inspires.

## **Equity as an Alternative to GERM**

An alternative policy framework is for educational policy to be driven by a commitment to create a great school experience for all learners through a focus on equity (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Sahlberg, 2015; Murgatroyd & Couture, 2013). A common definition here for equity is that it is the strength (or actually the weakness) of the relationship between a student’s family background and her measured learning in school. The weaker that relationship is, the more equitable the education system is.

This alternative framework, also competing for a major slice of the future, sees the work schools do very differently. Rather than focusing on the “products” of schooling in terms of the workplace competencies and skills, this approach sees education as an opportunity to enable and encourage the pursuit of bold, big ideas and to develop the person as a citizen, imaginer and lifelong learner. It is also seen as a way of creating real opportunities to promote and support the public good and well-being of society and community through enhancing the ability of learners to think critically and develop a life-long passion for learning for learning’s sake. As R. H. Tawney (see Goldman, 2013) observed, the purpose of education is “not to make society richer or better run, but to make it more human and fully just”. It also seeks to contribute to economic development not by focusing on a narrow range of skills (e.g., science, technology, engineering and mathematics) but by identifying for each learner the potential they have for contributing to society.

Rather than being competency driven and focused on globally standardized competitive skills, the equity based approach sees learning as a fundamental process in support of finding the passion and interests of each child and then fostering their development so as to create a more equitable, informed and empowered community / society in which informed and engaged citizens have a quality of life which has meaning for them. Rather than being driven by short-term needs of the economy, the work of schools should be driven by a commitment to the development of people as individuals and as citizens.

The key ingredients of this approach are:

- A focus on the learner as a whole person, not just as a potential employee or “contributing citizen”.

- A focus on understanding, engagement, knowledge and skills – balancing these different aspects of the task of learning and understanding.
- An understanding that the key to such learning is the teacher (or team of teachers) who must be empowered to align available resources to the needs of the learner.
- Rather than having a strong focus on accountability, this approach favours social responsibility and human judgment informed by variety of assessments focused on helping the teacher to improve her work and the learners improve their learning.
- The teacher and the communities of practice to which she belongs are central to this approach to learning. Rather than “follow” the script of a master course, here teachers as professionals tailor their learning designs and activities to the needs of the individual students in their class. Working with a curriculum framework, the teacher as professional is enabled and empowered as a designer of learning.
- In the name of equity, there is a strong focus on inclusion and accessibility – rather than continuously increasing the GPA needed to “get in” to college or university, as institutions and programs look more to commitment, determination and engagement.
- Attention is paid to the support needs of learners – additional help is available for those struggling with concepts or skills or who need additional help because of a learning, or other, disability.
- Compassion, mindfulness, values and empathy and support are seen as core to learning as outcomes.
- Technology can be used to support these overall activities but is not seen as a driver or “the answer”.

This provides a very different philosophical base for the work of schools – leading to very different designs for learning, assessment and curriculum and very different measures of learning outcomes.

Many attempts are being made to focus on equity not just in terms of access but also in terms of success in education – it is at the heart of the UNESCO’s work on rethinking education, for example as well as being at the core of Delors’ Commission four pillars of education (UNESCO, 1996). It is also the basis of the success of the school system in Finland, long regarded as amongst the highest performing systems in the world (Sahlberg, 2011, 2015, 2016). It competes with GERM for the ideological standing as the base for strategic policy and investment decisions by governments around the world and is built on a strong and compelling evidence base.

The OECD (2012) suggests that there are ten steps to achieve equity in education. These are:

*In Designing an Education System Focused on Equity:*

- Limit early tracking and streaming and postpone academic selection.
- Manage and limit school choice so as to contain the risks to equity.
- In upper secondary (high school), provide attractive alternatives, remove dead ends and prevent drop-out by creating personalized curriculum.
- Offer second chances to gain from education.

*For Education Practice:*

- Identify and provide systematic help to those who fall behind at school and reduce year repetition or “remediation” by repetition.

- Strengthen the links between school and home so as to help disadvantaged parents to help their children to learn.
- Respond to diversity and provide for the successful inclusion of migrants and minorities within mainstream education.

*Resourcing:*

- Provide strong education for all, giving priority to early childhood provision and basic schooling.
- Direct resources to the students with the greatest need.
- Set concrete targets for more equity, particularly related to low school attainment and dropouts.

The challenge is to see how a focus on equity, politically and socially important in the developed world, translates into meaningful policy directions and decisions in the transitioning and developing economies of the world.

However, there are constraints. David Berliner's findings that socioeconomic conditions account for some sixty percent of the variance in student performance in the US, with a further twenty percent due to schools and half of that due to teacher practice (Berliner, 2009, 2011, 2012) and the OECD's most recent finding that 46% of the variance in scores on its PISA tests of mathematics, science and reading competence were related to social factors, especially poverty (Ash, 2014; OECD 2013). Quality teaching can enhance the impact of schools significantly (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2010), which speaks to the critical importance of a focus on teacher quality and the professional development of teachers. Education systems, wherever they are, need to be instruments for inter-generational poverty reduction as well as places where resilience can develop in response to social conditions.

We contrast GERM and equity as two "solitudes" for educational policy, but in reality there are many other policy frameworks that could be adopted (OECD, 2015). A focus on innovative educational systems in which governments create a framework but then encourage regional and local innovative approaches to meeting framework expectations; a focus on differentiation, with each school finding a unique way in which to offer learning and development (science schools, arts schools, dance schools, ICT schools, etc.) – all offering a core curriculum, but then adding a specialism (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993); or schools which are driven not by specialism but by wicked problem solving (Murgatroyd, 2010). The GERM versus equity debate, however, puts the policy framework at the heart of education at the forefront and provides a basis for an evidence based, rational discussion about significantly contrasting approaches.

## **GERM, Equity and Development**

For many years the orthodox view among classical economists has been that the state should take the major responsibility for both financing and supplying educational services. Over the past three decades, however, a new group of "neoliberal" organizations and critics have argued that education systems in developing countries should be financed more directly by private households or employers, particularly under the sharply constrained financial circumstances facing many governments in transitional economies. The argument has also been made that a policy focus on equity may be appropriate for developed economies, but that developing economies have to "race to secure the basics" in education so as to enable economic growth, which in turn provides the basis for public finance. Given these constraints, GERM is said to offer more promise to support developing and transitional economies (Microsoft, 2006) than "pure" public education systems driven by equity.

The core neoliberal argument is rooted in the economics of results based management. A neoliberal approach assumes market reforms will improve the quality of education by freeing schools from the

restrictive control of government, and creating incentives to innovate through market competition. Importantly, creating market-like institutions in education requires both the devolution of control over budgets and decentralization of control over instruction to allow schools to innovate. Supply-side competition rewards schools that can innovate to improve quality with more students and greater funding. In theory, inefficient schools will lose students and be forced to improve or shut down. These potential cost savings and quality improvements are attractive to developing countries that need to expand education rapidly with limited public resources (Abrams, 2016). The fact that GERM is practiced in major donor countries – England, the US, Australia, New Zealand and several Nordic countries (notably Sweden) provide impetus and ideological support for this position (Ravitch, 2013).

Using markets to distribute education limits the government's capacity to use education as a tool to promote opportunities for social mobility, enable equity and challenge gender discrimination. Critics of the neoliberal education policies argue that these costs in terms of equity outweigh benefits from gains in efficiency (Vandenbergh, 1999). Because neoliberal policies reward schools for providing education at the lowest cost, it is argued that this creates a perverse incentive to attract low-cost students (e.g., highly able) and no incentive to provide high quality services for students who are more costly to educate (e.g., students with disabilities, students with learning challenges).

Developing countries continue to use private schools primarily to increase supply rather than choice, but there is variation in the degree to which private markets are believed to be a solution to problems of low supply. Many developing countries are reluctant to cede control of education to “pure” markets – insisting on setting curriculum objectives, controlling the supply and wages of teachers and, in many cases, offering subsidies to ensure access to basic education, especially for girls.

The result is a constant tension between the neoliberal market-based policies and a relentless focus on equity in the shaping of educational policy. This becomes evident in reviews of the work of the World Bank in education, which, despite its overall support for the general direction of GERM, also sponsors projects that have a strong focus on equity. Indeed, several reviews (e.g., Lincove, 2009) suggest that the World Bank is more liberal than neoliberal at the level of its projects but more neo-liberal at the level of policy (Tikly, 2016). However, for many of the projects it finances in developing countries, there are no equity safeguards in place to ensure the education of girls or access to quality education for those who have learning challenges (so called “special needs” students).

Markets change the dynamics of an education system. While some market driven changes can be helpful – they can, for example, lead to a stronger focus on outcomes for the system overall, encourage differentiation and lead to new investment in the professional development of teachers – they can also be damaging. Much depends on the conditions under which markets operate – the regulatory, quality assurance and investment regimes and the system “rules” with respect to students who are disadvantaged or disabled.

## Balancing Equity and Performance

The World Bank education strategy 2020 (World Bank, 2011) is predominantly a strategy that seeks to balance GERM with a focused approach to equity, hence, its promise of “learning for all”. We will use this important strategy document to demonstrate the tension between GERM and Equity as policy frameworks.

The proposed strategy framework for education to 2020 has these key elements:

- A strong focus on governance, results based management and accountability – moving to results based financing, public accountability and intervention for “failing” schools.
- A focus on benchmarking performance of education systems and transferring “best practices” between systems so that performance can be improved.
- The use of public-private partnerships to enhance capacity.

- Leveraging technology, especially technologies associated with core skills and literacy and learning analytics.
- Narrowing the curriculum to competencies, knowledge and skills needed for economic growth and development.
- Recognizing the critical importance of early childhood education.
- Seeing learning as “life-long”, not just related to formal schooling.
- Developing strategies for learning to ensure equity – especially gender equity, equity for those from different income groups / regions and for those who have disabilities or learning challenges.

The Bank is clear that “no one size fits all” in terms of national strategies and that the key to equity as a focus in a system is flexibility through systematic approaches to planning and remediation coupled with the rigorous use of evidence in the making of decisions. As it rolls out its strategy it is seeking to secure value for money and equity of access and outcomes for learners in its projects. The challenge that the Bank has in implementing its ambitious education strategy is that its implementation operations are primarily controlled by economists and other non-education experts. Educationalists in charge of lending operations in education are not a guarantee of success but lack of them is an invitation to failure.

This agenda is responding to some stark facts. In some countries, recent studies show that a quarter to a half of youth who have graduated from primary school cannot read a single sentence (Collins & Wiseman, 2012). Using results based management (RBM) and a focus on equity in terms of assessing the impact of learning on targeted groups, the World Bank is seeking to make smart ideas work and be both scalable within a country and transferable to other countries. But its underlying strategy is strongly GERM focused.

Key to the strategy is an understanding of the role of the teacher as both educator and decision maker. The OECD is very clear in its analysis of systems performance – those closest to the learner have by far the greatest impact on learning outcomes but are not able to overcome the powerful impact of social conditions, culture and community (Duncan & Murnane, 2011), though exceptional teachers make more of an impact than poor quality teachers (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2010). The World Bank strategy for teachers and how they are to be supported tells us a great deal about the true nature of this work. The question to ask is simple: “Is the strategy of the World Bank focused on management and systems or on empowering and enabling high quality professional teachers to make decisions?”

Verger and Altinyelken (2013) point to the development of System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER) – a key world bank value adding assessment system – as an indicator of the new managerialism, especially is it affects teachers. The World Bank makes clear that teachers are a clear focus for systems capacity assessment. The critique of this work includes these key observations:

1. GERM and the World Bank do not take sufficient account of the teacher’s voice and experience when designing systems interventions, especially those that involve teachers and teacher assessment. If we are to learn about capacity building, teachers need to feel ownership of and engagement with their own work.
2. GERM and the World Bank treat teachers as objects for intervention rather than as the primary agents of educational change and development. The World Bank strategy sees teachers as “human resources” and “employees” rather than the major agents of change. There are no references in the World Bank strategy to teachers as members of professional bodies or unions or to teachers as learners, researchers and change agents.

3. Teachers are disempowered in many systems reforms by the development of a standardized curriculum, high stakes testing, target setting and competitive funding as well as value added teaching assessments.
4. In some reforms, parents are deemed more influential than teachers, especially when community councils and parental choice enables parents to determine a great many functional features of school systems.
5. Many managerial reforms seek to increase the reporting and accountability functions for teachers while at the same time de-professionalizing them (Sahlberg, 2006).
6. Teacher preparation and the requirements for high standards for professional entry are being “traded” against the need to massively increase access so as to meet the call for universal primary education. Rather than looking to intensify and invest in teacher preparation and continuing professional development, many GERM proponents are seeking to lower these investments and reduce the costs of teachers.
7. Many teachers are being asked to adopt new ways of working and new practices in the developing world whether or not they have access to appropriate infrastructure and resources. The rabid promotion of ICT is an example of this in action, especially when the focus for these ICT investments is in learning analytics rather than in learning for basic skills.

Many of the reforms guided by GERM and its advocates are based on weak or selected evidence. Rarely are the practices of high performing systems like Finland, Canada or Cuba used as the basis for system change and practice recommendations. The US and England – both of whose systems are poorly performing and declining – are used as role models for reform and development. The World Bank’s rhetoric needs to be unpacked and assessed against the known experience of high performing systems in the world if social justice, equity and genuine development are the intentions.

## A Path Forward

Policy makers face difficult choices. What practical steps can they take to make these choices in a professional, evidence-supported way that would also lead to sustainable change? There are four developments which could assist developing nations in the development of both an appropriate strategic focus and operational plan for their school systems, and would help them make choices between GERM and equity frameworks for policy and practice. These four developments would permit the appropriate “mix” of strategies, methodologies and actions based on clear and substantial evidence of current performance and future potential, perhaps involving a mix of approaches designed with the specific national conditions, context and culture in mind. These are:

1. **An expert assessment of the current state and future potential of a national or regional educational system.** Alongside with the OECD PISA evaluation framework which does not look at curriculum, pedagogy, well-being, values or inclusion<sup>1</sup>, take a broader and more inclusive approach to system review using a panel of international experts, new approaches to data collection focused on engagement, health, equity and performance, new methods of curriculum review and an analysis of special needs and new frameworks for understanding school performance which are informed by equity, four decades of research on school design to overcome the challenges of poverty and inequity and on a view of teachers as professionals. As an example, Scotland has a ten-person panel advising the First Minister on educational change and development (Whitaker, 2016).
2. **Linking the educational system of a region or nation with that of others striving for similar outcomes.** Building communities of practice for policy makers and system leaders, for school teachers and their students and for school leaders can produce significant outcomes which impact teaching, classroom activities, school based leadership and system development.

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<sup>1</sup> These are not within the mandate of the OECD.

Rather than encouraging educational tourism, building communities of system practice can make a difference to both the quality and speed of system change (Johnson, 2007).

3. **Linking schools with schools to form professional communities and teachers with teachers to form national communities of practice.** Within a country, linking schools with each other in professional exchange and communities of practice is a significant route to transformation and change.
4. **Developing new approaches to school leadership development and school capacity building, which leverage technology, new approaches to leadership and new methods of peer-to-peer support.** Leadership throughout a school and school system is clearly a vital component of any strategy for effective schooling. A strong focus on developing leadership appropriate to the context of schooling in a jurisdiction is required so as to enhance school performance, strengthen professional practice and enable student success. Such leaders need a variety of practical skills and a depth of understanding of the work of leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2005; Hargreaves, Boyle & Harris, 2014; Murgatroyd, 2011). They also need to build and support the work of professionals and support staff within the school. Focused professional development of teachers and strong teacher-led organizations are also a key requirement for effective school systems.

A practical approach to education development, based on equity and evidence and focused on enhancing collaborative professional practice and capacities are the core requirements for effective schooling in a jurisdiction.

## Conclusion

Finding a path to equity and high performance is a difficult journey for any nation, as any Finnish or Canadian educator would attest. The challenge for developing countries is not to be seduced by “shiny objects” or “silver bullets” but to painstakingly build capacity and performance through focused investments which empower and enable professionals, working with their communities to deliver meaningful education that meets local and community needs. Shortcuts and quick fixes are less likely to produce sustainable results than the gradual progress towards the goals of equity in education and the development of great schools for all.

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